

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase

Mount Airy, Surry County, SR0865, Listed 8/28/2012

Nomination by Laura A. W. Phillips

Photographs by Laura A. W. Phillips, December 2011



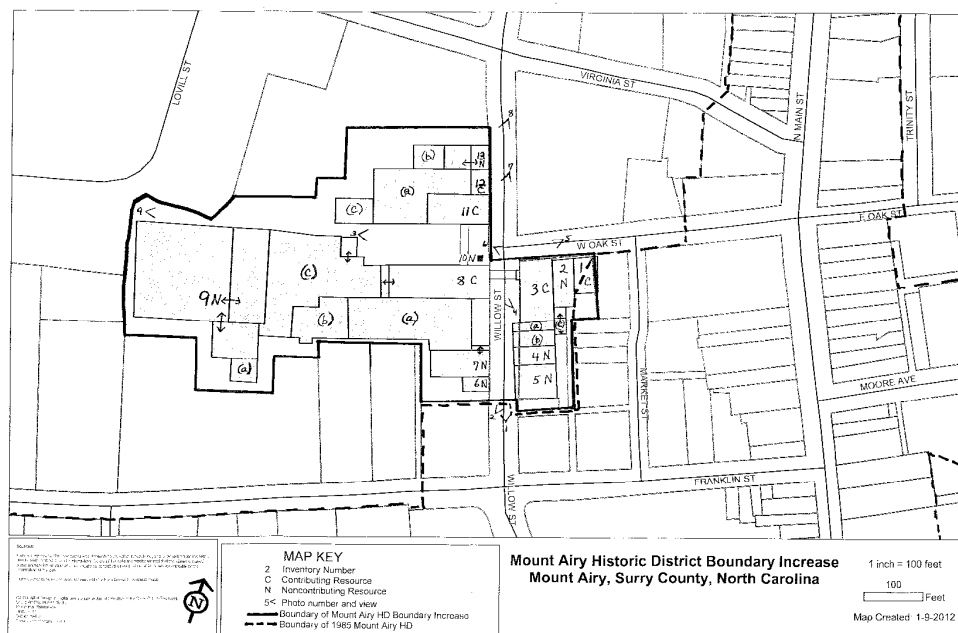
Willow Street, looking north



Willow Street, looking south



Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 1



Historic District Map

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase

other names/site number Spencer's

2. Location

street & number Willow and West Oak streets not for publication N/A

city or town Mount Airy vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Surry code 171 zip code 27030

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional
comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
entered in the National Register	_____	_____
See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
determined eligible for the	_____	_____
National Register	_____	_____
See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
determined not eligible for the	_____	_____
National Register	_____	_____
removed from the National Register	_____	_____
other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☐ building(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

194

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>INDUSTRY</u>	Sub: <u>manufacturing facility</u>
<u>INDUSTRY</u>	<u>industrial storage</u>
<u>COMMERCE</u>	<u>restaurant</u>
<u>COMMERCE</u>	<u>specialty store</u>

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>VACANT</u>	Sub: _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Heavy Timber Mill Construction

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>BRICK</u>
roof	<u>METAL</u>
walls	<u>BRICK</u>
	<u>CONCRETE</u>
other	<u>BRICK</u>

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or a grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Industry

Period of Significance

Ca. 1888 -1962

Significant Dates

Ca. 1888

1892

Ca. 1910

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Areas of Significance

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approx. 5

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 534900 4039360
2 _____

Zone Easting Northing
3 _____
4 _____
____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura A. W. Phillips, Architectural Historian

organization N/A date April 2, 2012

street & number 637 North Spring Street telephone 336-727-1968

city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27101

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Building No. 8, and a small frame guard house (#10) built in 1978. All thirteen buildings now stand largely vacant, awaiting rehabilitation and adaptive re-use.

Centered on the intersection of Willow and West Oak streets immediately west of Mount Airy's commercial Main Street, the buildings in the boundary increase are arranged along the east and west sides of the 200 block of Willow Street, the west side of the 300 block of Willow Street, and the south side of the 200 block of West Oak Street. The land within this area slopes gently downward from east to west and from south to north. There is no intentional vegetation within the boundary increase. An open area between the buildings in the 200 and 300 blocks of Willow Street opposite West Oak Street is paved and is used for a driveway and parking. It includes a small electrical transformer near the street.

In urban fashion, the buildings in each block are contiguous and are separated from the street only by a sidewalk. Eleven of the thirteen buildings are brick, and these were painted pale blue ca. 1970 to distinguish them as part of the Spencer's Inc. apparel manufacturing complex.

The buildings range in height from one to four-and-a-half stories and in width from one to seven bays. The three largest buildings, all originally associated with the tobacco industry, are located on the northwest (#11), southwest (#8), and southeast (#3) corners of the intersection of Willow and West Oak streets and are three-and-a-half, four-and-a-half, and two-and-a-half stories, respectively. A fourth, three-story, building (#12) originally associated with the tobacco industry stands in the 300 block of Willow Street. The seven commercial buildings (#1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 13) are one and two stories in height. All buildings within the boundary increase were most recently used as part of the Spencer's apparel industry complex, and all but the easternmost building (#1) on the south side of West Oak Street and the free-standing guard house (#10) on the west side of Willow Street are internally connected to the adjacent buildings. Buildings 2-5 are linked internally, as are buildings 6-9 and buildings 11-13. The buildings from one block to the next are also connected by means of enclosed elevated walkways. The east-west walkway over Willow Street just south of West Oak Street dates from the early 1930s; the other elevated walkway connects the buildings on the west side of the 200 and 300 blocks of Willow Street and was built in the late 1960s.

Most of the buildings are of simple design with little ornamentation. Interestingly, the most decorative buildings are two of the earliest, those of the Sparger Brothers Tobacco Company. Typical of late-nineteenth century tobacco industry buildings, both have stepped end gables. One (#11) has brick pilasters and horizontal brick bands corbelled with two layers of dentils. The other (#8) features façade pilasters and Italianate-influenced corbelled labels over the east façade windows. These and the other two tobacco buildings (#3 and 12) have segmental-arched windows. The commercial buildings either have plain facades or simple upper façade panels created by the brickwork. The most ornate commercial building (#7) stands on the west side of the 200 block of Willow Street. It has pilasters dividing the bays, upper façade recessed

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The area of the boundary increase joins the Mount Airy Historic District on the east and south. Across West Oak Street to the north is Renfro Mill (NR, 1980). To the north, northwest, and southwest are expansive parking lots associated with Spencer's. Only small portions of these, immediately surrounding the industrial buildings, are included in the boundary increase.

Integrity assessment

The Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase retains integrity from its period of significance, ca. 1888 to 1962. There has been no loss of buildings and no buildings have been moved. The district retains the massive late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century industrial buildings that dominate the five-acre area and give it its primary historical and architectural character. It also retains the small group of commercial buildings that were constructed around the industrial buildings during the 1920s and 1940s and later incorporated into the industrial complex. The fact that of the thirteen buildings, only five are contributing is deceptive, because it does not convey the overall cohesiveness of the district. Those five include the defining industrial buildings (#3, 8, 11, and 12) and one commercial building (#1) that was never connected internally to the other buildings. Of the eight noncontributing buildings, two were built after the period of significance. One (#9) is an expansive industrial building erected in 1971 at the west end of the boundary increase. It must be included in the district because, in the mid-1980s, its east side was physically interconnected to building #8 and its additions. The other is a 1971 small frame guard house. The remaining six noncontributing buildings are one- and two-story commercial buildings from the 1920s and 1940s that must be included in the boundary increase because after the period of significance they were interconnected to the adjacent

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industrial buildings. Although three of the four primary industrial buildings have had additions, this is consistent with the development of historic industrial complexes, and several of the additions were made during the period of significance.

Also typical of historic industrial buildings that have remained in operation past the mid-twentieth century, windows were bricked or blocked up after air conditioning was installed to create a more controlled work environment. However, the outlines of the windows remain visible, as do the sills, and on the largest building (#8), the windows were left intact and were blocked up on the interior, so that their enclosure is much less visible from the outside. For the same reason that the windows in the industrial buildings were enclosed, the storefronts of the commercial buildings were enclosed with brick (one has been re-opened). Nevertheless, the outlines of the storefront openings are still visible, and the massing, materials, and features of the facades remain largely intact. Over all, the Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase continues to provide a strong image of a nineteenth-century tobacco industry complex that transitioned into a textile industry complex in the twentieth century.

Inventory List

The following inventory list provides basic information for all properties in the Downtown Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase. Included are each property's name, date or approximate date of construction and major alterations, contributing or noncontributing status, and a summary of each property's physical character and history. Unless otherwise noted, the buildings are brick, painted light blue, and the foundations could not be seen.

The buildings in the district no longer have individual street addresses. The most recent address within the district was 238 Willow Street, the location of Spencer's, Inc. office, and that number was used for all the buildings. Since 2007, when Spencer's, Inc. closed, there have been no applicable addresses in the district. Thus, for the purposes of the inventory list and district map in this nomination, the buildings that originated as individual buildings, not additions, have been assigned numbers 1-13. The numbering begins with the former commercial building on the south side of West Oak Street at the east end of the district and moves west to Willow Street, then south along the east side of Willow Street, and then north along the west side of Willow Street from the south end of the district to the north end. The three primary industrial buildings have several additions each, and these are discussed within the numbered inventory entries and designated as (a), (b), etc. Like the numbers assigned to the primary buildings, they are keyed to the district map.

Buildings that add to the historic associations or historic architectural qualities for which the district is significant, were present during the district's period of significance (ca. 1888-1962), relate to the documented significance of the district, and possess historic integrity, are

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Inventory entries are based on on-site recording and research conducted by Laura A. W. Phillips in December 2011 and January 2012. Sources used are listed, in abbreviated format, in parentheses at the end of each inventory entry. Sanborn maps from 1891 to 1948 and Mount Airy city directories were used so frequently that they are listed simply as SM and CD. Full citations are provided in the bibliography.

Contributing building

South side, 200 block West Oak Street
Ca. 1940, ca. 1980, 2011

Insurance maps show that this one-story brick commercial building was erected between 1934 and 1944. It replaced a one-story frame house on the site that had been the residence of Mrs. J. L. Sparger. Initially, the brick building housed two businesses. From at least 1949 through 1974, the east half was Everybody's Lunch, a restaurant. The west half was the Goard and Poore Grocery in 1949, but by 1954 it had become the Goard (Goad) Grocery, which it remained until at least 1964. Spencer's, Inc. purchased the building in 1969 and used it for storage. The storefronts were enclosed ca. 1980, but they were fully reopened in 2011. This is the only building in the district that does not currently interconnect with one of the primary industrial buildings.

The two-bay-wide building is of simple design with the only decoration taking the form of a slightly recessed brick panel surrounded with soldier-course bricks above each storefront. Running-bond brick faces the front of the building, and the east side and rear are brick-faced tiles. The roof, which has a plain parapet across the façade and stepped parapets on either side, slopes gently from front to rear and has a covering of foam and small gravel. There are not windows on the east side, and the rear has one door and three enclosed windows per half. The west side abuts Building 2. The interior has a concrete floor, plastered walls, and the ceiling

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joists are currently exposed. Two doors, one of which is very narrow, open between the two halves (SM; CD).

The existing historic district boundary cuts diagonally across the building from northeast to southwest. The boundary increase rectifies this situation by including the entire building and the commercial lot on which it stands.

2. Building

Noncontributing building

South side 200 block West Oak Street
Ca. 1946, ca. 1980

According to the Sanborn maps, this one-story brick building was erected between 1944 and 1948. The 1948 map shows that it was a machine shop; the following year it was listed as the Mount Airy Automotive Company in the city directory. By 1954 it had become Calloway's Furniture Company, and by 1960 it was the Calloway Sales Company. After being vacant for most of the remainder of the 1960s, it was a storage facility from at least 1969 through 1974. Spencer's, Inc. purchased the building in the mid-1970s, interconnected it with building #3, and used it for the company's design department. The storefront was infilled with brick around 1980.

The front is faced with running bond brick and is completely plain. The only façade opening is a single metal door in the center. Lines in the brickwork suggest that building had a single storefront. The sides of the building abut buildings #1 and 3. The rear and exposed south end of the east side are constructed of brick-faced cinder blocks and openings have been enclosed. The roof, which has a plain parapet across the façade, slopes gently from front to rear and has a covering of foam and small gravel (SM; CD).

3. Tobacco Leaf House

Contributing building

East side 200 block Willow Street
Ca. 1905; ca. 1910; ca. 1933; ca. 1951; ca. 1960; early 1980s

Sanborn maps show that between 1900 and 1905 a one-story-with-basement brick building was erected at the southeast corner of Willow and West Oak streets. It was the Leaf House for the Rucker and Witten Tobacco Company, whose tobacco factory was across Willow Street in the former Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 2. The 1910 map shows a brick building of the same configuration at this location. However, it is depicted as a two-story building from plans. It is possible that the two-story building was an entirely new structure, but it is more likely that the one-story building shown on the 1905 map was enlarged. However, at this point, physical

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In 1926, J. H. Crossingham moved to Mount Airy from the Philadelphia area of Pennsylvania, where his father had established the Crossingham Knitting Mill in 1889 to produce “Dr. Spencer’s” union suits. In Mount Airy, on July 8, 1926, the young Crossingham joined with W. E. Lindsey, John Banner, and F. L. Hatcher in establishing the Mount Airy Knitting Company. Hatcher and Crossingham became the largest shareholders and leaders of the company until their deaths in 1978 and 1964, respectively. J. H. Crossingham Jr. later became president, chairman of the board, and chief operating officer. Although the company initially manufactured union suits and other forms of underwear, this use evolved in the late 1940s. Seeing the opportunity presented by the baby boom after World War II, the company began to produce, almost exclusively, infants’ and children’s wear. In 1962, the company changed its name to Spencer’s Incorporated of Mount Airy, N.C., in honor of the “Dr. Spencer’s” underwear the company had produced in its early days. For more than three quarters of a century, it prospered, with numerous expansions – including buildings #1-13 in the boundary increase and other plants offsite – until it became one of the largest and most respected producers of infants’ and children’s wear in the United States. The company that started in 1926 with only twelve employees grew to have some 2,000 employees, in Surry County alone, by the late 1980s. It closed in 2007.

Although the Mount Airy Knitting Company was established in 1926, it did not purchase the leaf house it occupied until June 1932. In 1933, it purchased the old Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 2 across Willow Street, and by the following year an insurance map showed that an enclosed, elevated walkway at second-floor height had been built over Willow Street to connect the two buildings. The 1934 map also shows that although the company had an office on the first floor at the southwest corner of the original building, it had built its first addition (a), to the south end of the original building, for an office on the first floor and a supply room on the second floor, by that time. That addition was narrow, but projected a short distance east and west of the original building. Around 1951, a second addition (b) was built like a bridge between the first

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For all, or at least most, of its history, the main entrance to the building was on the west side facing Willow Street and the building always carried a Willow Street address. The first floor of the original building appears to have had eight bays, though some of these are now hidden behind small additions, and the second floor appears to have had ten bays. All windows are

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bricked up and all but two are single and have flat lintels and slightly projecting sills. The other two, on the first floor, have broad, segmental-arched brick hood molds that spanned pairs of windows, based on a late 1930s photograph. The ends of the hood molds have small, stepped corbels, the only decorative feature of the building. The north end of the west side has a shallow, two-story addition around the elevated walkway that was built between 1948 and 1979. It houses the heater room and a stair. It has a flat roof with terra cotta coping and irregularly placed windows, now bricked up, with brick sills. At the north end is a brick stack. At the south end, slightly indented from the west wall, is a one-story entrance to the stair. It has a hinged brick joint at the southwest corner, a door on the south side, and a slightly sloping roof. The sidewalk along the south third of the west side of the building ramps upward and back down again. It has been this way since at least the 1930s. At the top of the ramp was the main entrance to the building and a brick loading platform with steps on the south end. The entrance and platform were enclosed, probably at the same time the stair tower was added, with a small brick structure that shelters a loading dock on the north end. Two large windows, now enclosed, are on the west side, and the roof slopes slightly from east to west and extends beyond the south end of the enclosure to shelter the current entrance and brick steps to it. The present entrance has a metal-framed glass door.

Except for the stepped parapet, the south end of the original building can no longer be seen. On the east side, the second-story windows remain exposed. They are replacement metal industrial windows with six horizontal lights. The east side's first story is hidden from view by building #2 and addition #3 (c).

Three additions have been built to the south and east sides of the building since 1930. The roof of each consists of built up foam and gravel. The first, ca. 1933 addition (a), was built to the south end of the original building. It is a two-story, one-bay-wide, rectangular brick structure that projects approximately five to ten feet beyond the east and west sides of the original building. It has a flat roof with a terra cotta tile cornice coping. The west, street, side has a large, square exposed window on the first floor (originally this was a pair of windows) and a single, bricked-up window on the second floor. The north side has a single window per floor. The first-floor window remains open, but has a replacement solid pane of glass. The second-floor window has been enclosed. The windows on the south side are no longer visible because of addition (b), but there is an added door that opens to the roof of addition (b). On the east side, there are three, metal, six-light windows that are exposed. A slightly smaller opening on the north side of the rear (east) portion of the addition has been enclosed and contains a projecting ventilator.

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Addition (c), on the east side of the building, was built ca. 1960. It consists of a one-story brick structure with a flat roof, a flat parapeted cornice on the east and south sides with terra cotta tile coping, and several openings. A single metal door opens from the east side to the alley. Two large windows are on the east side. One has been enclosed with plywood. The other, near the south end of the addition, is enclosed on the north half, but the south half is exposed, exhibiting a metal industrial tilt-out window with a total of twelve lights (SM; Southeastern Underwriters Association 1934 map of Mount Airy Knitting Mill; Industrial Risk Insurers 1979 map of Spencer's Inc.; *Spencer's*, pp. 7, 15, 55, 58, back end page (late 1930s photograph); Crossingham Interview; Jones Interview.)

Noncontributing building

East side 200 block Willow Street
Ca. 1926, ca. 1980

The front of the building is faced with textured bricks, which are distinguished from the smooth bricks that fill the storefront openings. The first story has two bays of unequal size that are separated by a brick pilaster. The south bay is larger and may have been used as an automobile

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entrance. Now, a single metal door pierces the brick infill of that bay. The second floor is four bays wide and has one-over-one replacement sash windows. The building's only decorative treatment is a single, non-recessed, brick panel above the second-story windows that is defined by its soldier-brick border. The roof, which is covered with foam and small gravel, slopes gently from front to rear. It has a plain façade parapet and a stepped parapet on the north side. The north side second-story windows have been enclosed, and the rear, with a door and a window, opens to an alley (SM; CD).

5. Stewart Building

Noncontributing building

East side 200 block Willow Street
1924; ca. 1980

Sanborn maps show that this two-story brick building was constructed between 1922 and 1929, and the upper façade carries two panels with raised letters and numbers, one labeled "Stewart Building" and the other labeled "1924." Until Spencer's, Inc. acquired the building for additional office space in 1973, it had a variety of uses. In 1929, it was a wholesale produce business. In 1934 it, along with building #4, was a knitting mill, probably Pine State Knitting. In 1944, the building housed an electrical repair business and a warehouse. In 1949, the south half of the first story was being used by Roy Estes' furniture repair business and Brock's Antiques. The north half of the first story was an auto sales business, which may have been part of the Moser Motor Company located in building #4. At the same time, the second floor was one large space and was the home of the Mount Airy Operatic Club and the Dorminy Dance Studio. Under Spencer's, Inc. ownership, the building was interconnected with building #4 and the storefront was bricked up ca. 1980.

Except for its name and date blocks, the façade is completely plain. The six plain brick pilasters that divide the storefront into five bays can still be seen. Otherwise, the storefront is infilled with brick into which two metal doors – one near the center and the other at the south end – have been inserted. The second story of the façade has seven bays with alternating single and double windows. The windows have been enclosed with plywood, and metal windows have been inserted in two of them. Terra cotta tile coping tops the façade's parapet, which is plain except for a largely hidden brick dentil course. Both sides of the building have stepped parapets. The roof, which is covered with foam and small gravel, slopes slightly from front to rear. Physical evidence shows that both the north and south sides had second story windows before the adjacent buildings were erected around 1926. When the building to the south burned around 1998, its demolition exposed a painted sign near the top of building #5 that reads, in part, "S. C. Stewart,

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Wholesale Fruits and Produce.” The rear of the building, which has enclosed windows, faces an alley (SM; CD).

6. Commercial Building

Noncontributing building

West side 200 block Willow Street
Ca. 1925; ca 1980

Sanborn maps indicate that this two-story brick building was erected between 1922 and 1929. Whether it was built as an addition to the automobile dealership adjacent to it on the north (building #7) is not known. However, from its first appearance on the Sanborn maps in 1929, there was an interior doorway between the two buildings. The map for that year indicates that the first floor was used as an auto parts store, while the second floor was an office, although locals remember that there was an apartment on the second floor. Through 1948, Sanborn maps continued to show that the first floor was used for auto parts, while the second floor was an office. Nevertheless, local memories recall that in the early 1940s, the first floor housed Hiatt's Radio Shop. In the early 1960s, the second floor became the offices of Ararat Rock Products, a company associated with the owners of Spencer's, Inc. Ararat Rock continued to occupy the second-floor office until the 1980s, while Spencer's, Inc. absorbed the building into its interconnected collection of textile industry buildings and additions. Spencer's enclosed the storefront around 1980, although the second-floor windows were left open.

The façade is two-bays wide and is faced with textured bricks popular during the 1920s. The storefront is headed by a brick soldier course. At the south end of the storefront is a replacement wood door whose upper glass panel and transom have been enclosed with plywood. A slender wood post with a classical cap divides the doorway from what had been the shop windows, now infilled with brick. A metal sign bracket is attached at the south end of the façade between the two floors. Typical of 1920s commercial architecture, the façade's second story has two pairs of one-over-one sash windows, each with a brick soldier course bordering it on the top and sides and a slightly projecting brick sill. A soldier course also runs across the parapeted roofline, which is capped by a terra cotta tile coping. Behind the parapet, the roof slopes from front to rear and is covered with tar and gravel. The exposed south side and rear of the building have smoother bricks than on the façade. The side has three one-over-one sash windows at second-floor height. The rear has bricked-in windows on the basement and first-floor levels and an open one-over-one sash window and door on the second floor. The door is sheltered by a fiberglass canopy, and a metal stair leads from a small entrance deck to the ground (SM, CD, Crossingham Interview).

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Noncontributing building

West side 200 block Willow Street
Ca. 1920; ca. 1980

Sanborn maps show that this building was erected between 1916 and 1922. For its first several decades, the building had automobile-related uses. Initially, it was a “garage” with a capacity for forty cars. By the late 1920s, it had become Surry Sales Company, which sold and serviced Chevrolets. In the late 1940s, it switched to a Buick dealership, Swanson Motor Company. In 1956, Crossingham Tractor Company, which was owned by one of the founders of Mount Airy Knitting Company and had been housed previously in the south half of the adjacent knitting addition (8a) built by Mount Airy Knitting Company in 1949, moved to this building. This allowed the knitting addition to be used totally for knitting. Crossingham Tractor Company displayed and sold tractors on the first floor and repaired tractors in the basement, which was entered from the rear. According to city directories, by 1964 the building housed the Discount House, which sold Mount Airy Knitting’s discount apparel. In the early 1970s, Spencer’s, Inc. (successor name to Mount Airy Knitting Company) took over the building and used it for their sewing operations. At this point, the building was interconnected to the knitting addition (8a). It was probably also at this time that a narrow addition that housed a stair to the knitting addition’s second floor was built at the northeast corner, within the front ell formed by the joining of this building and the knitting addition (which was set back from the street). Around 1980 the building’s fenestration was enclosed.

The one-story brick building has a three-bay façade, whose bays are delineated by four wide, plain, brick pilasters. The outer two bays had large windows with a brick base, but the window openings have been infilled with brick. The center bay probably originally held a vehicular door, given the building's longtime use with automobiles and tractors. Now it holds a pair of doors topped by a two-light transom. The remainder of the space in the center bay on either side of the doors is infilled with modern brick. Above the storefront, a horizontal band of brick, along with the pilasters, creates three panels in the upper façade. The top of each panel is bordered by a brick dentil course. A shallow stepped parapet forms the building's cornice. At the south end is another short stretch of dentils. At the north end of the building is a narrow, brick, stair addition, which is tied in with the adjacent knitting addition to building #8. It has a door on the north side and two small, bricked-in windows. The rear of the building projects farther west than the adjacent building (#6) on the south. It has brick-infilled segmental-arched windows on two levels and what was a vehicular door to the basement, now enclosed with plywood, in the center. The rear shows that the building has a bowstring roof. It is built up of foam with gravel (SM, CD, Crossingham Interview).

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Contributing building

West side 200 block Willow Street
1892; 1949; 1971; 1978; mid-1980s

The 1891 Sanborn map shows the second of the two large tobacco factories built by the Sparger Brothers Tobacco Company, but notes that it was under construction. Note: For the purposes of this nomination, the second Sparger factory built within the historic district boundary increase area is called Factory No. 2. The older of the two factories (building #11) is called Factory No. 1. The October 16, 1891, issue of the *Yadkin Valley News* was more specific, reporting that “The brick walls of the mammoth Sparger tobacco works are rising above the second floor.” The building almost certainly was completed the following year. The 1896 and 1900 Sanborn maps indicate that it was a plug tobacco factory and laid out the uses of the different floors. A small office was in the southeast corner of the first floor, but otherwise that floor was used for the prizing, stemming, and drying processes. The second floor was for packing and casing, and the upper floors were used for storage. A three-story water closet stood on the south side of the building, and a boiler room projected from the northwest corner. At the rear of the four-and-a-half-story factory was a three-story section that held drying rooms. A box factory stood behind the tobacco factory in a separate building. By 1905, Sparger Brothers was no longer in business, and the factory – still laid out in the same way – was that of the Rucker and Witten Tobacco Company. Seven hundred workers were employed. The 1910 Sanborn map indicates that, for a very brief time, the building was not associated with the tobacco industry. Instead, it was the Surry Manufacturing Company Cotton Mill. However, by 1916, it had returned to the tobacco fold and was a leaf house operated by R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. It retained that use at least through 1929. In 1933, the Mount Airy Knitting Company, whose main building was on the southeast corner of Willow and West Oak streets, acquired the building by trading Reynolds another building in Winston-Salem for it. Thereafter, the building remained with the textile industry, as part of the Mount Airy Knitting Company and, after a 1962 name change, as Spencer’s, Inc., until Spencer’s closed in 2007.

By 1934, Mount Airy Knitting Company had built an enclosed, elevated walkway at second-story height, east-west across Willow Street to connect its two buildings. According to the 1948 Sanborn map, Mount Airy Knitting had added a machine shop to the northwest corner of the mill and a separate storage building behind it, which was later used for cloth printing. In 1949, the company built a large, L-shaped addition (a) on the mill's south side that was set back about twenty feet from the street to allow for parking. The north half of this addition was used for knitting, and the south half, until 1956, was used by the Crossingham Tractor Company

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Like the earlier Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 1 to the north, Factory No. 2 is a hulking brick structure with a front-gable roof (now sheathed with metal), overhanging eaves, and stepped gable ends. A small dormer projects from the roof on both the south and north sides near the west end, and the mechanical room for the elevator projects upward from the roof ridge near the east (front) end. The façade is four-and-a-half-stories, but because the land slopes downward from east to west, much of the basement is above ground, so that the building is often thought of as a five-and-a-half-story structure. Iron tie rods run east-west and north-south through the building, as witnessed by the end bolts on the exterior walls. The façade is six bays wide, and the front entrance is at the center. It has a double-leaf door and a large, two-light, segmental-arched glass transom with a brick hood mold. Five concrete steps lead from the sidewalk to the front entrance. The façade exhibits Italianate-style influence in its brick pilasters, horizontal corbeled bands between each floor that make the pilasters appear to have caps at each floor level, and ornamental corbeled labels above the segmental-arched windows. The stepped parapet has a corbeled cornice and the outer steps of the parapet project beyond the north and south walls of the building and are corbeled underneath. The sides and rear of the building also have segmental-arched windows, but with no ornamentation. Until at least the late 1930s, the windows were wood six-over-six sash. Probably in the 1940s, they were replaced with metal industrial windows with sections that tilt outward. The façade windows have sixteen lights, while those on the side elevations have twelve lights. In the 1980s, the windows were blocked up on the inside, so that they appear the same on the exterior. The second-story elevated walkway across Willow Street that has been in place since ca. 1933 extends from the window in the northernmost bay on the second story of the façade. The enclosed walkway is sheathed with metal, has several windows that have been painted, and carries the Spencer's name and logo. The metal-sheathed walkway roof is a shallow gable. On the south side of the building, only the windows of the easternmost

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On the south side of the 1892 factory building is the two-story, brick, knitting addition (a) built in 1949. It is set back from the façade line of the adjacent buildings to allow for the parking of trucks and tractors when the south half of it was used by Crossingham Tractor. The first story has three large, horizontal windows, bricked-in ca. 1980, a single pedestrian door near the south end between two windows, and a loading door at the north end. A flat canopy with a wood soffit stretches across the pedestrian door and two windows north of it. The second floor is completely plain, except for the painted Spencer's signage. The plain cornice is capped by a terra cotta tile coping. The rear of the knitting addition is also brick. A row of now-bricked-in square windows runs about halfway along the south elevation toward the west, and from there to the end of the building the wall is plain. West of the knitting addition, the south and west walls of the 1978

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addition (b) are sheathed with metal. At the west end is a projecting loading door. The 1980s one-story infill (c) that now connects the 1978 addition (b) to building #9 is metal-sheathed (SM, Industrial Risk Insurers 1979 map of Spencer's, Inc.; *Yadkin Valley News*; Crossingham Interview).

9. Spencer's Knitting Plant

Noncontributing building

West side 200 block Willow Street behind Building #8
1971; 1980s

In 1971, Spencer's built a large knitting plant immediately west of, but not joined to, the additions to its primary mill (building #8). The eastern fourth of the building was used for bleaching and dying. The western three fourths held the knitting operation. A wing near the east end of the south side was used as the yarn receiving department; a small addition (a) was built to the east half of its south side, probably in the 1980s.

The large, rectangular, one-story building was constructed of concrete blocks and has a flat roof. The roof of the bleach and dye section is covered with a rubber membrane. The other sections of the building have a foam and gravel roof. Metal gutters edge the perimeter of the building, and metal downspouts are positioned at regular intervals along the north side. The building has no windows. On the north side is a loading dock at the east end and a pedestrian door at the approximate center. Two metal exhaust vents on this side of the building project from the bleach and dye section. A concrete ramp that rises from west to east runs along the north side. The west end of the building has a single pedestrian door near the center, and a painted sign on the north half that reads, "Spencer's Infant & Children's Wear." The south side of the building has a single pedestrian door near the center. East of the center door and adjacent to the yarn receiving wing, a low concrete-block enclosure holds a large, vertical, round tank and three round horizontal tanks. The south side of the yarn receiving wing has a loading dock and a pedestrian door reached by a flight of concrete steps. There are no openings in the addition (a) to the yarn receiving wing. In the mid-1980s, a roof connected the east side of the knitting plant to the additions behind the main mill (building #8) (Crossingham Interview.)

10. Guard House

Noncontributing building

West side 200 block Willow Street opposite West Oak Street
1979

Located just north of Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 2 (building #8) and just within the main entrance to the Spencer's complex on the west side of Willow Street is a small frame guard

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house. It has a concrete slab foundation, plywood siding, windows on all four sides, a door on the east side, and an asphalt-shingled side-gable roof with widely overhanging eaves (Crossingham Interview).

11. Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 1

Contributing building

West side 300 block Willow Street
Ca. 1888, 1973, ca. 1980, 1987

James H. and Benjamin Franklin Sparger formed a tobacco manufacturing business in the early 1880s. They began operation in a small frame building on Franklin Street, but soon moved north to Willow Street, where they built two large factories. This was the first, and it is the oldest building in the boundary increase. Its exact date of construction is not known, but it was probably built around 1888, when the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railway arrived in Mount Airy, making large-scale manufacturing feasible. Sparger Brothers was first listed as a tobacco manufacturer in the 1890 edition (published in 1889) of Branson's *North Carolina Business Directory*. An early, undated, photograph of the factory shows it standing alone with no buildings immediately next to it. Note: The name at the top of the stepped-end gable in the photograph labels the building as Factory No. 2, which is was, since the Spargers' earlier frame building on Franklin Street was their first factory. However, soon after this brick building (#11) was erected, Sparger Brothers built a larger brick factory (building #8) just to the south. To avoid confusion in this nomination, building #11 – the first of the Sparger factories on Willow Street – is called Factory No. 1, and building #8 is called Factory No. 2. The photo shows plowed earth across Willow Street from the factory, newly planted trees, and wood rail fences. Typical of late-nineteenth century tobacco buildings, the rectangular brick structure is shown with a three-bay façade with segmental-arched six-over-six sash windows, a central double-leaf door with a segmental-arched head in the center bay and a single door in the south bay, and a front-gable roof with stepped-parapet gable ends. The outermost, lowest steps of the parapet extend beyond the building to the north and south and are corbeled underneath to return to the outer façade pilasters. The façade is decorated with slightly projecting brick pilasters and double-layer dentil courses above each of the three-and-a-half floors, thus creating a paneled effect. Windows are seen to line the north side of the building. By the time the 1891 Sanborn maps were produced, the building is shown with another building (#12) nearly touching it on the north side. Attached to the rear of the building is a narrow, two-story brick section. The Sanborn map reveals that at that time the factory had 180 workers. The building was heated by steam, and it had electric lights. The basement housed the engine and dynamo. The first floor was used for the prizing, stemming, and drying processes. Packing and casing took place on the second floor, the third floor was used for leaf storage, and the fourth half story was used for storage. The 1896 Sanborn

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Today, the form of the three-and-a-half-story-with-basement building and the facade detailing remain intact. The façade doors had been bricked up by 1977, and the windows were bricked up ca. 1980. However, their placement and multi-layer segmental-arched heads remain intact. Small vents have been punched into several of the enclosed windows on the façade and south-side elevation. Iron tie rods run through the building from north to south and from east to west. The roof is metal-sheathed. The vast spaces of the interior have brick walls, wood floors, and heavy-timber support posts, beams, and joists. In the late 1930s or early 1940s, a brick connector was built between this building and the one (#12) adjacent to it on the north. When this happened, the corbeled step on the north side of the façade parapet was infilled with brick. In 1973, an L-shaped, three-story addition (a) was built behind the original building, wrapping around its north side to the rear of the adjacent building (#12). It is built of concrete blocks, although a section on the north side is covered with corrugated metal. There are no openings on the south side. The

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rear of the addition has three doors arranged in descending order from south to north. They are connected by an exterior metal stair. The rear portion of the north side has a row of four loading doors. A flat metal canopy suspended by cables attached to the building shelters the loading doors. A one-story addition (b), also built in 1973, extends northward from the three-story addition immediately east of the loading doors. This addition also attaches to the rear of building #13. Addition (b) has a concrete-block rear wall and a metal north wall. The west end of the north wall has a loading door. The 1973 additions were built during Spencer's ownership and were used as part of Spencer's packing and shipping department. In 1987, a one-story, concrete-block addition (c) was built to the rear of the three-story 1973 addition (a), extending westward. It was used, at least in part, to house the air compressor. The south side of the 1987 addition has one pedestrian door. The rear elevation has a loading door, an adjacent pedestrian door with metal steps leading to it, and a projecting air vent. Near the east end of the north elevation is another loading door. The flat or sloping roofs of the three additions are built-up foam and gravel (SM; CD; Branson, 1890; 1934 map; Crossingham Interview).

12. Warehouse

Contributing building

West side 300 block Willow Street
Ca. 1890; ca. 1945; ca. 1980

Sanborn maps show that the second oldest building in the boundary increase area had been erected by 1891, when it was being used for the storage of manufactured tobacco. It likely was built by the Sparger Brothers Tobacco Company, whose three-and-a-half-story factory (#11) was located only a few feet to the south, but this has not been documented. The 1896 Sanborn map clearly indicates that the building was part of the Sparger Brothers operation. In 1900 and 1905, it was used as a tobacco warehouse for the Fulton Tobacco Company and in 1910 for the Fulton-Smith Tobacco Company. By 1916, it was no longer used for tobacco storage, but was a fertilizer warehouse. Throughout the 1920s, it was a produce warehouse. By 1944, it had become part of the Renfro Knitting Mills complex, whose main building was located directly across Willow Street. The Sanborn map for that year indicates that the first floor was used for a “rest. rm,” the second floor was used as storage, and the third floor housed manufacturing. The 1944 map also shows that a stair had been built in the narrow space between this building and adjacent building (#11) to the south and that an enclosed, elevated, two-level (at the second and third floors) walkway led from the space between the two buildings across Willow Street. Based on a 1980 photograph, the walkway was removed after that time. The 1948 Sanborn map suggests that the space between the two buildings had been enclosed. The uses for this building were the same in 1948 as in 1944, except that no use is listed for the third floor. By 1956, a three-story addition had been attached to the rear of the building, doubling its size. At that time, the building

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was still part of Renfro Knitting Mills. In 1968, Spencer's purchased the building, and thereafter it served as part the apparel manufacturer's packing and shipping department.

The three-story brick building is very plain, but the segmental arches of façade fenestration reflect its late-nineteenth century origin. Around 1980, Spencer's bricked in the fenestration, but the outlines of the openings and the slightly projecting sills, along with the segmental-arched lintels, make clear its location and form. The façade is two bays wide. The first story appears to have had a pedestrian door in the north bay and a vehicular door in the center. A modern pedestrian door has been punched into the south end of the façade. Six iron tie rods project slightly from the façade, two per floor. The cornice features a slightly projecting brickwork band with terra cotta tile coping. The roof, which is built up of foam and gravel, slopes from east to west. On the north side, the original building has a stepped parapet. The rear addition does not. A 1973 addition (a) to building #11 abuts the rear addition of this building (SM. Crossingham Interview).

13. Commercial Building

Noncontributing building

West side 300 block Willow Street
Ca. 1929, ca. 1980

The 1929 Sanborn map indicates a two-story brick building with a one-story brick rear wing at this location “from plans.” It was designed to be a store on the first floor and an office on the second. In 1944 a restaurant occupied the first floor, while the second floor remained in use as an office. The rear wing was used as a warehouse by the Mount Airy Canning Company. The 1949 City Directory records the New Willow Café at this location. After Spencer’s purchased the building in the late 1960s, it was used as part of that company’s packing and shipping department. The storefronts and second-story windows were bricked up ca. 1980.

Although the façade has been modified for its industrial use, most of the original façade features remain visible. Flat brick pilasters divide the façade's first story into two storefronts. A metal door and a now-enclosed square window pierce the bricked wall of the south half of the façade. The façade's second story has a rhythmic arrangement of windows above the storefronts in which a double window is flanked by single windows. Above the second-story windows, plain brick pilasters divide the recessed brick wall into panels. The façade is crowned by a corbeled cornice. The roof of the building, which slopes downward from east to west, is composed of foam and small gravel. A stepped parapet runs along the north side of both the two-story and one-story parts of the building (SM; CD).

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Summary

Located near the Virginia state line in North Carolina's Piedmont region, Surry County was a center for tobacco cultivation from the second half of the nineteenth century through most of the twentieth century and of tobacco manufacturing from the post-Civil War years until the early years of the twentieth century. The earliest tobacco factories were relatively small and were located in the countryside near the tobacco fields. However, after the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railway connected with Mount Airy in 1888, making large-scale manufacturing feasible, tobacco manufacturing moved from the country to the city. In Mount Airy, the industry was centered on the intersection of Willow and West Oak streets, just west of the commercial downtown, and large-scale, two-, three-, and four-story brick plug tobacco factories and leaf houses were erected beginning in the 1880s. Around 1888, Sparger Brothers Tobacco Company built a three-and-a-half-story brick factory (building #11) on the west side of Willow Street. By 1891, a three-story brick tobacco warehouse (building #12) had been erected immediately north of it. During late 1891 and 1892, Sparger Brothers built a second brick tobacco factory (building #8) – this one four-and-a-half stories – on the west side of Willow Street south of their first brick factory. It was followed, ca. 1893, by the R. Roberts Leaf Tobacco House (NR 2000) at the northeast corner of West Oak and Willow Streets. The last building in the group was a one-story tobacco leaf house (building #3) constructed ca. 1905 at the southeast corner of West Oak and Willow streets and enlarged to two-and-a-half stories ca. 1910. In their materials, stepped-end gable form, segmental-arched windows, and detailing of pilasters, dentiled cornices and corbeled window labels, these buildings exemplify the typical tobacco industry buildings erected in Piedmont North Carolina between ca. 1880 and ca. 1910. After the Tobacco Trust put the independent factories out of business during the early years of the twentieth century, these large buildings, with their vast interior spaces, were soon converted to use by the burgeoning textile industry.

Mount Airy Knitting Company (renamed Spencer's in 1962) was established in 1926 in the former tobacco leaf house (building #3) at the southeast corner of Willow and West Oak streets. Producing union suits and, later, infants' and children's clothing, it expanded throughout the twentieth century until it occupied not only its original site, but also the former Sparger Brothers Tobacco Company factories on the west side of Willow Street and seven surrounding commercial buildings along with multiple additions. In 1958, near the end of the period of significance (1962), Spencer's employed 705 workers, 686 of which were production workers. That same year, the company produced 1,598,000 dozen garments with a value of \$4,389,402.

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The Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase, with approximately five acres and thirteen primary resources, enlarges the original Mount Airy Historic District, which was listed in the National Register in 1985. The boundary increase encompasses four surviving late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century tobacco buildings, which, along with the R. Roberts Leaf Tobacco House (Renfro Mill, NR 2000), formed the heart of Mount Airy's historic tobacco district. After 1926, these four buildings served as the core of one of Mount Airy's largest textile industries, the Mount Airy Knitting Company. The locally significant historic district boundary increase meets Criterion A for its industrial significance in both the tobacco and the textile industries. It meets Criterion C for its industrial architectural significance, because the heavy-timber mill construction, form, materials, and details of its core buildings typify tobacco industry buildings erected in Piedmont North Carolina during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Its period of significance spans the years from the ca. 1888 construction of the Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 1 to 1962, fifty years ago, when Spencer's continued to be an important textile manufacturer. Although Spencer's continued to prosper after 1962, that period is not of exceptional significance.

Historical Background and Industry Context

The community that became known as Mount Airy was located between Lovills Creek and the Ararat River on the main stagecoach road from Salem, North Carolina to Wytheville, Virginia. Beginning in the third quarter of the eighteenth century with a few settlers who lived in what was known as “the Hollow,” it soon became an overnight stopping place for travelers, at the same time serving as a trade center for the surrounding agricultural region. Old photographs show that by the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Mount Airy had a collection of well-built frame and brick buildings. The town was officially incorporated in 1885, poised for significant development when rail service arrived. Finally, in 1888, the long-awaited event happened when the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railway arrived in Mount Airy. Providing the long-sought guarantee of speedy transportation to Greensboro, Fayetteville, and Wilmington, North Carolina and Bennettsville, South Carolina, the railroad enabled the establishment of large-scale industries – including tobacco, furniture, granite, and textiles – in the growing town. All were important in the town’s history (Phillips, *Simple Treasures*, 40-41).

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, plug tobacco factories were located in the countryside alongside the tobacco fields. From the standpoint of rural buildings, these frame and log structures were large, but they did not compare in size with the mammoth brick tobacco factories that were later built in some of North Carolina's towns and cities. After northern soldiers were introduced to the quality of North Carolina's tobacco during the Civil War, the demand for tobacco products increased. Coupled with the availability of rail transportation, this

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The area just west of Mount Airy's commercial Main Street, centered on the intersection of Willow and West Oak streets, became the center of Mount Airy's tobacco district, although there were several other tobacco buildings scattered around town, including the Hadley, Smith and Company Plug Tobacco Factory on West Pine Street and the Globe Tobacco Warehouse at the corner of South Main and Worth streets. At Willow and Oak, a major tobacco building was erected on each of the four corners. Three of these, plus another tobacco building on Willow Street, are in the Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase. The fourth, the R. Roberts Leaf Tobacco House (later Renfro Mill) on the northeast corner of Willow and West Oaks streets, was listed individually in the National Register in 2000 (Phillips, *Simple Treasures*, 184-185; Phillips, National Register nomination for Renfro Mill).

At least two, if not three of these buildings were erected by brothers James H. and B. Franklin Sparger. Their father, Merlin (or Murlin), had been a tobacco manufacturer in the rural area northeast of Mount Airy. In the early 1880s, James and Frank Sparger organized the Sparger Brothers Tobacco Company in Mount Airy. They began operation in a small frame structure on Franklin Street, where the Mount Airy Masonic Temple was later built. Soon they erected two large brick factories nearby on Willow Street (*Mount Airy Times*, September 24, 1943). The first of these, at the northwest corner of Willow and West Oak streets, was probably built ca. 1888, around the time of the arrival of the railroad. The large brick structure had three and a half stories and a basement. It was depicted on the earliest Sanborn map in 1891, which reported that it had 180 workers. Next to it on the north was a three-story tobacco warehouse, which the brothers may also have built. The Sparger Brothers' business was obviously growing rapidly, for the 1891 Sanborn map also showed, at the southwest corner of Willow and West Oak streets, a four-and-a-half-story-plus-basement brick tobacco factory that was under construction. By October of that year, according to the *Yadkin Valley News*, the building's brick walls were rising above the second floor (Sanborn Map, 1891; *Yadkin Valley News*, October 16, 1891). Presumably the building was completed in 1892. Both of the Sparger factories had stepped end gables and decorative brick facades. By 1905, however, the once prosperous Sparger Brothers Company had left the tobacco business, and other concerns occupied their Willow Street buildings (Sanborn Map, 1905).

The situation with the Sparger Brothers Tobacco Company illustrates what happened to the tobacco industry in the Piedmont's smaller cities and towns, including Mount Airy. The heyday for the tobacco industry in Mount Airy was the last two decades of the nineteenth century. In 1890, Branson's *North Carolina Business Directory* listed nine tobacco factories in town. However, some tobacco factories faltered with the nationwide financial panic of 1893, and those that didn't were stopped by the Tobacco Trust. James B. Duke's multi-million dollar

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American Tobacco Company, based in Durham, expanded so rapidly at the end of the century that by 1904 it controlled an estimated three-fourths of the tobacco industry in the United States. The smaller, independent factories simply could not compete and were either bought up by the American Tobacco Company or forced out of business. Even after the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1911 dissolved many of the large trusts, the successor companies controlled an equally large proportion of the total business. As a result, the small factories of the Bright Leaf tobacco region, of which Surry County was a part, continued to decline in number. The *North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory* recorded a tobacco factory in Mount Airy for the last time in 1912 (Phillips, *Simple Treasures*, 41; Phillips, National Register nomination for Renfro Mill).

Though the tobacco factories were gone, the tobacco leaf houses remained, some until the 1930s, because there was still a need for them. Leaf houses were used for a variety of functions, including stemming (removing the tobacco leaves from the stem), re-drying (removing the access moisture remaining in the leaf after the farmers' curing process), packing the tobacco in hogsheads, and storing it a year or more for future sale to manufacturers (Phillips, National Register nomination for Renfro Mill). In fact, from at least 1916 to 1929, Winston-Salem's R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company used the larger of the two Sparger Brothers factories as a leaf house (Sanborn Map, 1916, 1922, 1929).

Between 1900 and 1905, the Rucker-Witten Tobacco Company, whose factory at that time was across Willow Street in the former Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 2, built a one-story brick leaf house at the southeast corner of Willow and West Oak streets. In 1910, according to the Sanborn map of that year, plans were in the works for a taller leaf house of the same configuration on that corner. Probably it was an enlargement of the Rucker-Witten building. The building retained its function as a leaf house, operated by different companies, until at least 1922. After that, the building transitioned to use by the textile industry (Sanborn maps, 1900, 1905, 1910, 1916, 1922, 1929).

It was the textile industry that brought new life to the former tobacco district. Earlier efforts at textile manufacturing around Mount Airy included the Brower cotton and woolen mills just east of Mount Airy in the 1840s, the Greenhill Cotton Mill just north of town in the late 1860s and 1870s, and the Laurel Bluff Cotton Mill west of Mount Airy beginning around 1890. The first two efforts were not long lasting, and by the late 1920s, Laurel Bluff was producing bone buttons. Later it served as a textile warehouse for Spencer's, Inc. None of the nineteenth-century textile mill buildings survive. In Mount Airy, the textile industry lay dormant until the 1920s, when apparel manufacturing revived it (Phillips, *Simple Treasures*, 41 and 136).

For a short time, Mayo Mills manufactured underwear in the former leaf house at the northeast corner of Willow and West Oak streets (outside the boundary increase area), but in 1921 that plant closed. Later in 1921, Renfro Hosiery Mills Company was incorporated and began manufacturing socks in the building Mayo Mills had vacated. Renfro continued operating

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Other hosiery and knitting mills followed in the 1920s and 1930s, including Argonne Mill (1927), Piedmont Hosiery Mill (1932), Barber Hosiery Mill (1938), Pine State Knitwear (1930), Quality Mill (1936), and Hynes Textile Company (1938). But it was the Mount Airy Knitting Company (later Spencer's, Inc.), started in 1926 in the former tobacco leaf house directly across West Oak Street from Renfro Mill, that paralleled Renfro's longevity and success, becoming one of the largest manufacturers of infants' and children's knitwear in the United States.

James H. "Jimmy" Crossingham was from the Philadelphia area of Pennsylvania, where his father had owned the Crossingham Knitting Mill, established in 1889. Crossingham's father died when Jimmy was eighteen, and although the younger Crossingham tried to continue operation of the mill, he was unsuccessful. In 1926, on the advice of friends, Jimmy Crossingham moved to Mount Airy, bringing knitting and sewing machines with him. On July 8, 1926, Crossingham, W. E. Lindsey, and John Banner signed incorporation papers for the Mount Airy Knitting Company. Frank Leslie "Les" Hatcher was also a partner in the company, and by 1930, he had bought out W. E. Lindsey's interest in the new mill. At that time, Hatcher was president and John Banner was secretary. Hatcher and Crossingham held the most shares, and in addition to Banner, other shareholders were G. C. Lovill and J. W. Lovill. Hatcher and Crossingham remained working officers of the company until their deaths in 1978 and 1964, respectively, providing years of continuity in the management of the company (*Spencer's*, 7, 9, 15, and 55).

The Mount Airy Knitting Company opened in 1926 in the former tobacco leaf house, although it apparently did not buy the building until 1932. Initially, there were only twelve employees, twelve knitting machines, and thirty-one sewing machines. The company made union suits for adults and children, although they soon began to make some baby shirts as well. By 1930, the number of employees had grown to fifty. In 1933, Mount Airy Knitting Company expanded across Willow Street, when it purchased the old Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 2. At the same time, the company built an elevated crosswalk between the two buildings. By 1934 the company had built an addition to its original building on the east side of Willow Street for more office space and a supply room. The original building with its additions continued to serve as the company's offices throughout its history. The Mount Airy Knitting Company was still young, but growing rapidly, and it managed to weather the Great Depression (*Spencer's*, 11 and 13; Jones Interview; Southeastern Underwriters Association 1934 map of Mount Airy Knitting Mill).

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Spencer's continued to expand throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. In 1968, the company purchased the Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 1 (#11) on the west side of Willow Street, just north of West Oak Street, and the old tobacco warehouse (#12) immediately north of it. By the early 1940s, both buildings had become part of Renfro Hosiery Mill, whose main building was across Willow Street. After the 1968 purchase, they became Spencer's shipping department. In the late 1960s, Spencer's built an elevated walkway connecting the two former Sparger factories. Between 1971 and 1987, several more additions were appended to both of the former Sparger buildings on the west side of Willow Street. Meanwhile, Spencer's was purchasing the surrounding 1920s to 1940s commercial buildings on West Oak and Willow streets and interconnecting them with the main mill buildings. In all, Spencer's came to have 386,690 square feet of mill and office space at its Willow Street plant, and there were additional plants, both in Mount Airy and out of state. By 1979 employees in Surry County alone totaled around 2,000 (Jones Interviews; Crossingham Interview; Sanborn Map, 1956; Terracon, i; *Spencer's*, 15).

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Spencer's came to be one of the largest manufacturers of infants' and children's clothing in the United States. It was a vertically integrated company, meaning that it was a complete processor, controlling every phase of manufacture: knitting, bleaching, vat dyeing, pre-shrinking, and shipping. It even made its own boxes. Its products included infant shirts, underwear, girls' briefs, sport T-shirts, frame-resistant sleepwear, creepers, bibs, washcloths and towels, blankets, contour crib sheets, diapers, gift sets, and numerous other items, which earned the *Good Housekeeping* and *Parents* magazines seals of approval. In addition to its manufacturing plants, Spencer's maintained offices and showrooms in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. It had approximately 3,800 general variety and department store customers (*Spencer's*, 33).

In 2007, Spencer's ceased its apparel manufacturing. The buildings on Willow and West Oak streets stand largely vacant, awaiting a third life.

There are two types of buildings in the Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase – tobacco industry buildings that were later used by the textile industry and commercial buildings. Each type is significant because of what it represents architecturally.

The first phase of tobacco factory buildings in North Carolina's Piedmont was farmer-operated plug tobacco factories of frame or log construction that were built in rural areas next to or near the tobacco fields during the second half of the nineteenth century. A good example in Surry County was the Smith-Sparger Tobacco Factory in the Sulphur Springs vicinity north of Mount Airy. It was a large, two-story log structure with a side-gable roof. Like most of the rural factories, it no longer stands.

The second phase of tobacco factory buildings includes larger brick factories and leaf houses that were built primarily during the 1880s and 1890s when tobacco manufacturing moved to urban centers. In their construction, form, and some of their details, these buildings reflected the rectangularity of form and regularity of articulation that was characteristic of nineteenth-century industrial construction in America. The standardization of factory design was related to the bay areas between interior load-bearing posts. The repetition of bays of uniform size produced the regular, rectangular forms of industrial buildings and the similarity of interior spaces among buildings. The placement of bays to form long, narrow buildings was based on the need for light and good ventilation. The regularity in the size and placement of windows openings resulted from the identical dimensions of the interior bays and the need for even illumination (Bradley, 229). Brick was the most common material used for the exterior walls of these nineteenth-century industrial buildings, and it allowed for the ability to add decorative features to the facades. Vertical pilasters and horizontal spandrels and stringcourses used on the facades of many of these buildings created articulated grids that often featured a lively interplay

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The nineteenth-century industrial design aesthetic is reflected in the buildings of the second phase of tobacco factory construction in Piedmont North Carolina, including buildings #3, 8, and 11 in the Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase. These buildings are brick, of multiple stories, and rectangular in shape with the depth of the building being much longer than the width. The front and rear gable ends are hidden behind stepped parapets, arguably the most defining feature of late-nineteenth-century tobacco factories in the Piedmont and largely distinctive from industrial buildings erected earlier in the nineteenth century and later in the twentieth century. Often these buildings feature decorative brickwork on the façade, such as panels, window hood molds, and corbeling. Windows are typically segmental-arched. The buildings' compression structural system allows for vast open interior spaces with wood floors, open ceilings, exposed brick walls, heavy-timber support posts and beams, and no nails. While some tobacco buildings took other forms, such as the Warehouse (building #12) on the west side of the 300 block of Willow Street, and some other industries made use of the form with stepped-end gables, by and large this form is emblematic of the tobacco industry.

The Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factories No. 1 (building #11) and No. 2 (building #8) on the west side of the 300 and 200 blocks of Willow Street, respectively, and the Tobacco Leaf House (building #3) at the southeast corner of Willow and West Oak streets are excellent representatives of this most typical form of tobacco industry buildings erected during the late nineteenth century. Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 1, built ca. 1888, is a three-and-a-half-story, brick, rectangular structure with a stepped-parapet gable roof, a three-bay façade, and segmental-arched windows. The façade is decorated with slightly projecting brick pilasters and double-layer dentil courses above each of the floors, creating a paneled effect. The 1892 Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 2 is a four-and-a-half-story, brick, rectangular building with a stepped parapet front-gable roof, a six-bay-wide façade, and segmental-arched doors and windows. While the sides and rear of the building are plain, the façade is ornamented with brick pilasters, horizontal corbeled bands between each floor, corbeled hood molds over the windows, and a corbeled cornice. The Tobacco Leaf House, built in the first decade of the twentieth century, is a two-and-a-half-story brick building with a stepped-parapet gable roof and a north façade with irregular fenestration. Most windows are flat-headed, rather than segmental-arched. Unlike the two Sparger Brothers factories, the Tobacco Leaf House is almost completely unornamented.

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Along with the R. Roberts Leaf Tobacco House (Renfro Mill, NR 2000), which stands at the northeast corner of Willow and West Oak streets and is nearly identical in size, form, and detail to Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 2 (building #8), the tobacco buildings in the Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase form the core of Mount Airy's tobacco district, which was centered on the intersection of Willow and West Oak streets just west of Mount Airy's commercial Main Street. Sanborn Maps show that there were other tobacco buildings located near these buildings, but they no longer stand. Two examples of the type in Mount Airy survive. The late-1890s addition to the frame Hadley, Smith and Company Plug Tobacco Factory on W. Pine Street is a three-and-a-half-story brick structure with stepped-parapet gable ends and segmental-arched windows. The ca. 1890 Globe Tobacco Warehouse on South Main Street is a one-and-a-half-story brick structure with stepped-parapet gable ends and round-arched fenestration.

Elsewhere in Surry County, the Dodson Brothers Tobacco Factory in Pilot Mountain no longer stands, but an early-twentieth-century photograph shows that the ca. 1900 brick building exhibited the same form as the Mount Airy tobacco buildings with its two-and-a-half-story height, stepped-parapet gable ends, and segmental-arched windows. Other examples of the building type in this area of the state but outside Surry County include the H. K. Reid Leaf House and the E. M. Redd and Company Leaf House, both built by 1885 in Reidsville (Rockingham Co.) Both are three-and-a-half-story brick structures with stepped-parapet gable ends and segmental-arched windows with brick hood molds. In Winston-Salem (Forsyth Co.), the ca. 1890 W. F. Smith and Sons Leaf House is a four-and-a-half-story stuccoed-brick building with stepped-parapet gable ends and segmental-arched windows. The 1891 Bird's Eye View of Winston-Salem shows that there were many other examples in the city's burgeoning tobacco district, but these were replaced by later buildings. In all, the surviving examples of this building type are only a fraction of what once existed, making the group of tobacco buildings in the Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase all the more significant. (The above discussion is based primarily on the author's architectural survey work in piedmont North Carolina, the Sanborn maps for Mount Airy, the 1891 Bird's Eye View of Winston-Salem, the author's *Simple Treasures: The Architectural Legacy of Surry County and Reidsville, North Carolina: An Inventory of Historic and Architectural Resources*, and the author's National Register nomination for Renfro Mill in Mount Airy.)

The vast interior spaces characteristic of the tobacco buildings were well suited to the needs of the textile industry, and when many of the tobacco factories and leaf houses closed in the early years of the twentieth century, apparel manufacturers took over the ready-made spaces. This was true for the tobacco factories and leaf house within the boundary increase, which became Mount Airy Knitting Company (later Spencer's Inc.) and also for the R. Roberts Leaf Tobacco Building outside the boundary increase, which became the Renfro (Hosiery) Mill. The

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When the Mount Airy Knitting Company built two-story brick manufacturing additions to its plant on the west side of Willow Street beginning in 1949, these additions continued the use of the wide-open interior spaces that had characterized the tobacco buildings. However, instead of having a heavy-timber post-and-beam structural system, these additions were built with a steel post-and-beam system. One major adjustment to the buildings came in the last two decades of the twentieth century, when the windows were bricked-up. Before air conditioning, the numerous windows in the manufacturing buildings were essential for air circulation. The installation of air conditioning in the mill buildings in 1979 and 1980 provided the ability to control the interior environment, and blocking up the windows contributed to that. This alteration was not just characteristic of the buildings in Mount Airy, but was industry-wide for older mill buildings that continued in use until recent years.

Commercial buildings make up the other buildings in the boundary increase area. They include buildings #1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 13, all one- and two-story brick buildings. Five were erected in the 1920s and the other two were built in the 1940s. These buildings are representative of those that were erected on Mount Airy's secondary commercial streets, rather than on Main Street, the primary commercial thoroughfare. The buildings on Main Street, which are included in the Mount Airy Historic District, were built primarily from the 1890s through the 1920s and are a rich collection of mostly two and three-story brick or granite-faced structures. Most are very stylish, with a good deal of ornamentation in wood, brick, and granite befitting Mount Airy's center of commerce.

Commercial buildings on the secondary streets are generally of simpler design and are mostly one and two stories. Those on Market Street, which parallels and lies between Main Street and Willow Street, date primarily from the 1920s and are also in the Mount Airy Historic District. Two-story buildings are on the east side of the street, but those on the west side are all one story. Although they are much simpler in design than their counterparts on Main Street, some of these buildings still include handsome ornamentation, including patterned brickwork with granite trim and classical ball finials atop pilasters. Others, including those that stand north of 235 Market Street, are totally plain save for a shallow brickwork panel in the upper façade.

The commercial buildings on Willow Street and West Oak Street, being two streets away from Main Street, are characterized by their simplicity. Their location surrounding Willow Street's industrial buildings probably contributed to their no-nonsense appearance when built. These buildings are compatible with the Mount Airy Historic District, and they provide a good setting for the architecturally significant industrial buildings that they surround. Two – buildings #7 and 13 – include some decorative elements, such as brick panels, simple corbeling, dentil courses, and a shallow stepped parapet, but the others, at most, make use of brick soldier courses

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During the third quarter of the twentieth century, the commercial buildings in the boundary increase were all purchased by Spencer's, Inc. and were interconnected with the other Spencer's buildings. Some were used for more office space, while others were used for manufacturing processes or to accommodate packing and shipping activities. Around 1980, all of their windows and storefronts were enclosed with brick, as were the windows of the industrial buildings. (The storefront on building #1 has been fully re-opened.) Nevertheless, the outlines of the storefront openings are still visible, and the massing, materials, and features of the masonry facades of these former commercial buildings remain intact. Although they are currently considered noncontributing resources in the historic district boundary increase because of their enclosed storefronts, these buildings have the potential to be contributing resources if their storefronts are re-opened in the future.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase is shown by the heavy solid black line on the accompanying district map, drawn to a scale to 1" = 100'.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase is drawn to encompass the cohesive collection of historic industrial resources associated with the Sparger Brothers Tobacco Company and the Mount Airy Knitting Mills and the historic commercial resources adjacent to those industrial buildings and later integrated with them. The boundary joins a section of the western boundary of the Mount Airy Historic District (NR 1985).

PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information for #1-5 applies to all nomination photographs:

- 1) Mount Airy Historic District Boundary Increase
- 2) Mount Airy, Surry County, North Carolina
- 3) Laura A. W. Phillips
- 4) December 2011
- 5) CD: NCHPO, Raleigh, North Carolina
- 6-7)
 - 1: Streetscape, 200 block Willow Street, view to north
 - 2: Streetscape, east side 200 block Willow Street, view to northeast
 - 3: Streetscape, between Buildings #8 and 11, view to east up West Oak Street to Main Street
 - 4: Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factory No. 2, west side 200 block Willow Street, view to northwest
 - 5: Streetscape, intersection of West Oak and Willow streets, view to southwest
 - 6: Streetscape, south side 200 block West Oak Street, view to southeast
 - 7: Streetscape, Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factories No. 1 and No. 2, west side 300 and 200 blocks Willow Street, view to southwest
 - 8: Streetscape, west side 300 and 200 blocks Willow Street, view to southwest
 - 9: Rear additions to Sparger Brothers Tobacco Factories No. 1 and No. 2, view to east